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THE GARDEN CALENDAR

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U. S. Department of Agriculture

A radio talk by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered during the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 50 associate NBC radio stations, Tuesday, June 26, 1934.

Hello Folks: Yesterday was one of my busy days, not that every day does not bring my allotted share of work to do, but yesterday I was engaged in making an inspection of several hundred of the Welfare Gardens of Washington. These welfare gardens are located on both public and private land that has been loaned or set aside for the purpose, and the gardens are being cultivated by families that have either been on the relief rolls, or those whose incomes have been so reduced that they are unable to make both ends meet.

You know there are a lot of folks who have been compelled to take an extra notch in their belts during the past year or so, but from the appearance of many of those gardens that I helped to inspect yesterday, the owners will have plenty to eat this summer and something to store for winter. The majority of these gardens have fifteen different varieties of vegetables growing in them, including potatoes, sweet-potatoes, cabbage, onions, carrots, beets, tomatoes, sweet corn, Lima beans and snap beans. When you consider that some of these gardens were very late in being started, and also that their owners have had little or no experience in the art of gardening, the results obtained so far are the more remarkable. For example, one gardener had picked one and a half bushels of snap beans for canning, another had several heads of very fine early cabbage, others had plenty of beets ready to pull, while the crops of early peas, radishes and lettuce had practically gone by.

In looking over these gardens, I was impressed by the difference in the growth of the crops as a result of good cultivation. Most of the gardens were well worked and free from weeds, but in a few cases they had been neglected, and as a result the crops were poor. The cultivation of these gardens is all done by hand, mostly with the hoe and rake, but in the majority of the gardens, the soil is loose and loamy, and the crops are growing very fast. On one tract of land the gardens were not planted until about the 12th of May, and yet there were the regulation fifteen crops in each of these gardens. The land on which these gardens are located is of several types from light sand to heavy clay, and in one or two cases on what was formerly trash dumps. Practically none of the land is ideal or even fairly well adapted for gardening, but through determination, supplemented by good cultivation, the gardeners are for the most part making good. This type of self-help is being fostered in many sections of the country, and is having a wonderful effect upon the morale of the people who are using subsistence gardens as a means of supplementing their food supply.

When these people all get back to jobs and can earn a good living they are going to be better customers for the products grown on farms and in

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commercial gardens; better customers because they will have learned the value of clean, fresh vegetables right from the garden. These people are enjoying their experience, and are spending many hours in their gardens. I noticed in many of the gardens a various assortment of pails and tin cans of 3 to 5 gallons capacity, and one of the supervisors told me that they were recovered from a nearby dump, and were being used to carry water from the river to water the plants, especially when new plants are being set out. I couldn't help thinking how much easier some of us get by in our gardening, and what wonderful advantages of water supply, and methods of cultivation we have at our disposal.

My inspection of the welfare gardens yesterday reminded me that it is the time for planting turnips in our northern gardens, and that a number of vegetables can still be planted for fall use. In fact, I went out in my own garden about dusk last evening and planted another row of bush Lima beans. Later in the evening, I chanced to talk with a farmer who lives several miles in the country, and he said that he had three plantings of sweet corn coming on, but intended to make his big planting for fall use within the next few days. I noticed also that the subsistence gardeners are nearly all making second or third plantings of corn, beans, tomatoes, etc., some of these plantings being made between the rows of early potatoes so as to occupy the ground after the potatoes are dug.

The prevailing fault that I noted in many of these subsistence gardens was that many of the crops are too crowded, and that the plants had not been thinned properly. In this connection, I want to again remind you that during dry seasons the plants do not want to be crowded, the rows should be farther apart, and a smaller number of plants allowed to remain in each hill. Owing to scarcity of land in the District of Columbia, the subsistence gardens are relatively small, and the owners are endeavoring to grow a large amount of food upon them, but on farms it is different, and there is no real reason for crowding, or even for interplanting in most cases. Keeping the soil rather firm below and loose on top also aids in keeping the crops growing during dry weather. I noticed that a number of the subsistence gardeners had mulched their tomatoes with the vines of their early peas, also that many of them had planted Kentucky Wonder and other kinds of runner beans in their corn.

I am just passing these observations on to you for what they are worth thinking you can use some of the ideas in your own gardens.